

A BANNER TO BE DISPLAYED.

What use can a Church have for a creed or a Confession of Faith? There are those who, affirming the Bible itself to be their creed, deny the right and value of any Confession of Faith, or other standard of truth. But the result has been in such religious bodies the existence of a concurrence in unwritten doctrine without a standard definitely stated to which to appeal. And the fruit is indefinite views and often a sad loss of harmony.

It has been a large part of the strength and steadfastness of the great churches, known as Reformed, that they have Confessions, firmly based they believe on the Word of God, which are the standards around which they gather, and under which they go forward. The Reformed Churches of the world represented in the late Ninth Council in New York, have Confessions, not identical in form and statement, but one in essential doctrine, so that in many lands, with a various history, speaking various tongues, they heartily concur and march compactly and confidently to win the world for Christ.

A primary use of a Confession is to declare to the world the truth which the Church understands the Scriptures to teach. The Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth"; pre-eminently a witness to all mankind for God, and the message of his truth and grace. The Church is commissioned to teach all nations. It is her office, not only to uphold the truth and to defend it, but to hold it up as a blazing torch before the eyes of men. Her own members, her children and youth, and all outside of her have right to ask the Church what she regards as the vital and essential truths of her great text-books, God's Word. In the conflict of human thought, of truth and error, it is the mission of the Church of Christ to stand and testify to the facts and truths which she has received by revelation from the God of Truth.

A Confession or creed is a bond of union and fellowship to those adhering to it, a banner around which they rally on the field. Like the flag of a nation, it affirms unity, and it effects unity. Like the standard of a chieftain, which draws together his followers, and holds them in united movement and effort, the standard of a church unites in one body those who have a common faith, and strengthens and inspires them for a common service.

By her Confession, moreover, the Church regulates the teaching given by her commissioned teachers, her ministers of the Word, and other office bearers. Her ministers are instructed and trained in the system of doctrine which the Church finds in the Word, and embodies in its creed. It is the creed of the Church and of all its witnesses and teachers. Through the mouth of all its preachers, the Church speaks to its own members and to all the world, and in no uncertain sound. It has a like precious faith, and affirms a concurrent system of truth, and speaks one great message. It has a right to keep its teachers, its preachers, its evangelists and missionaries true to its own faith, and battling under its own banner.

One of the most vital uses of the standards of a church is the instruction of her own youth. In the form of catechisms the Churches bring the great truths of the redemption through the love and the blood of

Christ to the minds and hearts of her children. So would she bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Probably no Church anywhere has a better manual wherewith to imbue the minds of the young in fundamental doctrine than English-speaking Presbyterians have in the Shorter Catechism. If it brings a somewhat tough and trying exercise to the youthful intellect, the mental and moral gymnastic which it affords is worth the labor and the pain of learning it. The men who have grown up upon such diet are not, as a rule, the weakest specimens of the race.

The most crucial test of any doctrine is its effect on character. Now men like the great theologian Dörner, and the great historian Froude, men like Mark Pattison and John Morley, being judges, Presbyterians have no reason to be ashamed of the ethical results produced in history by their system of doctrine. History testifies to its capacity to build up firm, if rugged, character—to make men strong, brave, upright and pure, and inspire them to high and noble aims, to give them a love of righteousness and a passion for liberty, to gird them to heroic endurance of suffering, and heroic resistance against wrong. It is a duty which the Church owes both to her creed and to her people to have them well drilled in the home, in Sabbath-school, and Bible-class. The world needs the discipline of such a system still, and never more than today.

"VACATIONS FOR PREACHERS AS AN INVESTMENT."

This was the subject of a striking editorial in a recent issue of *The Atlanta Constitution*. It is so full of soundness that we print it in full. As you read it, remember that it was not written by a minister, but by a man of affairs, and that it was not originally published in a religious paper, but in a large secular paper. There are still a good many people who have an idea that the minister has comparatively little to do, and they can not see any reason why he should take a vacation. It is to be hoped that they will read this editorial. Here it is:

"If the theory of regular vacations has been accepted as a conceded commonplace in the business world, how much more vividly should its principles apply to those self-sacrificing men whose important function it is to safeguard the spiritual status and welfare of the community?

"The clergyman's life has its beginning and ending, and all its intermediate chapters, in ceaseless activities. Never is he released from a continual mental strain, whether it be preparation for his weekly discourses or the even more exacting requirement of mingling upon intimate terms with all sorts and conditions of men.

"The demand upon his sympathies is proverbial and perpetual. In sorrow and sickness, sin and suffering, joy and success and failure, marriage and death, his services are in requisition; and to each fresh and differing call he must bring a keen and perceptive mind and a spirit chastened of weakness and self.

"The ordinary individual would fall upon absolute collapse after a few days of gruelling and contrasted tests of this nature. But the preacher, of whatever denomination, is expected to endure it smilingly, to preserve his cheerfulness under all conditions, and to